

Message Text

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ACTION SS-20

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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1340

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 0996

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BPRO MO US

SUBJ: BENHIMA VISIT

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

1. FORTHCOMING VISIT TO US OF MINISTER OF STATE FOR COOPERATION DR. MOHAMED BENHIMA (SCHEDULED ARRIVE WASHINGTON MARCH 18) WILL BE A MAJOR PREPARATORY STOP FOR KING'S OWN VISIT PLANNED TO BEGIN MAY 21. I AM CONVINCED IT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL IF YOU COULD RECEIVE HIM EVEN IF ONLY BRIEFLY. HE WILL BE IN WASHINGTON FOR TWO DAYS AS LEADER STRONG FIVE-MAN MOROCCAN INVESTMENT MISSION WHICH WILL THEN VISIT NEW YORK, CHICAGO, SAN FRANCISCO AND HOUSTON FOR EXTENSIVE CONTACTS WITH AMERICAN COMPANIES WHICH MAY BE INTERESTED IN INVESTING IN MOROCCO.

2. BENHIMA HAS LONG PLAYED VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN MOROCCAN POLITICS AND IS VERY CLOSE TO KING. HE WAS PRIME MINISTER FROM 1967 TO 1969 AND ALSO HAS SERVED AS MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, COMMERCE, EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE, AND INTERIOR (HE WAS IN LATTER KEY POST DURING AUGUST 1972 COUP ATTEMPT). FOREIGN MINISTER AHMED TAIBI BENHIMA IS HIS BROTHER AND ANOTHER YOUNGER BROTHER WAS JUST NAMED AMBASSADOR TO TUNISIA. IN ANY CURRENT RANKING OF MOROCCANS CLOSEST TO KING, BENHIMAS COME VERY HIGH. PROBABLY STRONGEST MAN IN CABINET, DR. BENHIMA HAS HIGH REPUTATION FOR INDEPENDENT THINKING AND AS TOUGH AND ENERGETIC TROUBLE-SHOOTER. I AM CONFIDENT YOU WOULD ENJOY MEETING HIM, AND KNOW THAT ANY PERSONAL ROLE YOU CAN PLAY IN HIS VISIT WOULD BE MUCH APPRECIATED BY KING.

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NOTE BY OC/T: DISTRIBUTION COORDINATED WITH MR. TWOHIE, S/S-O

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